



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE BELL

1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 2 - FEBRUARY, 2024

At Church on Sundays:

♦ 8:30 am Early Informal Service

♦ 9:30 am Regular Service. This service also available live on

Facebook and YouTube. The Church's website has the links.

♦ Sunday School & Youth Group—see inside for details

Visit us on the Web:

www.fumceg.org
www.facebook.com/FUMCEG

Phone: (518) 477-9693

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Rev. Danyal Mohammadzadeh
Pastor

Gail Welkley

Administrative Assistant



AN OVERVIEW OF OUR 2024 LENTEN JOURNEY

It doesn't matter how old we are. There is always an inner dialogue in our minds which starts with questions such as how to handle pain and suffering, what is the meaning of life, and what's our purpose. The **Bible provides a framework and a source of guidance to help us to navigate those** questions and experience peace along the journey. It widens our perspective. The Bible gives us God's vision as a beacon that will illuminate the path.

In our 2024 Lenten journey, we will enjoy the Book of Psalms. We will specifically look at six Psalms. Here is an overview of the psalms and the themes that we'll explore:

On **February 18**, the first Sunday of Lent, we will contemplate on Psalm 2 and the question: *Why Do We Need to Find Jesus in the Psalms?*

On **February 25**, the second Sunday of Lent, we will contemplate on Psalm 16 and the question: *Finding Jesus with Us in Our Hard Places.*

On **March 3**, the third Sunday of Lent, we will contemplate on Psalm 23 and the question: *Finding Jesus as Our Shepherd.*

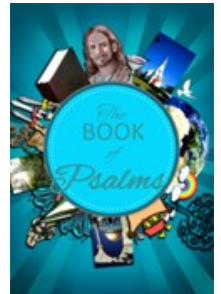
On **March 10**, the fourth Sunday of Lent, we will contemplate on Psalm 110 and the question: *Finding Jesus as Our Hope.*

On **March 17**, the fifth Sunday of Lent, we will contemplate on Psalm 69 and the question: *Finding Jesus as Our Strength.*

On **March 24**, Palm Sunday, we will contemplate on Psalm 22 and the question: *Finding Jesus as Our Savior.*

All of these Psalms were chosen because they allude to the Messiah and they highlight Lenten themes that you may be focusing on this season like worship, hope, prayer, confession, forgiveness, courage, and faith. These themes may receive extra attention during Lent, but they are excellent topics to explore at any time.

One of the intriguing features of this study revolves around the multiple layers of discovery. Even as the Psalms reveal Jesus, the same Psalms also reference King David, the author of approximately half of the Book of



(Continued on page 2)

A Reconciling Congregation

(Continued from page 1)

Psalms and considered to be Israel's greatest king. We will look at portions of King David's life that point to more about Jesus.

The Psalms provide a perfect framework for experiencing Lent through the verses that were Jesus's own scriptures, offering both him and us strength and wisdom in a painful and redemptive season.

Peace be with you,
Pastor Danyal

THE BELL is published monthly (with the exception of August) by the First United Methodist Church, 1 Gilligan Road, East Greenbush, New York 12061-1780. February 2024, Volume 26, Issue 2. **George Herrick**, Editor; **Shawna Lambert**, **Danyal Mohammadzadeh**, **Gail Welkley**, Editing Team; **Kathy Van Buren**, Production Leader; **Dave Caneen** and **Paul Deming**, Photographers; **Marian Smith**, Envelope Labeler; The Church Staff: **Danyal Mohammadzadeh**, Pastor; **Gail Welkley**, Administrative Assistant; **Lauren Lehmann**, Substitute Director of Children's Christian Education; **Amber Telford**, Youth Leader; **Jacqueline Krahforst**, Organist; **Robert Thomsen**, Choir Director; **Cynthia McLaughlin**, Director of Bell Choirs; **Steven Green**, Custodian; **Helen de Leon Camarce**, Missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, Treasurer of the agency's Cambodia and Southeast Asia Missions and part of the Cambodia Women's Livelihood Projects.

SOME NOTES ABOUT WORSHIP FOR FEBRUARY

“Methodist worship is full of music – we like to sing – a lot!” One writer said this, “Singing and meditating upon hymns has been a characteristic of Methodism since its beginning.” In **the March 2023** issue of *The CHURCH BELL*, part of the story of Fanny Crosby, once a worshipper at John Street UMC in New York City, was highlighted. She was a great hymn writer in the late 1800’s. She wrote them and we sing them.

Upstairs in the back of our church Robert Thomsen waves his hands, and at times his whole body, as he directs our choir in another anthem or hymn. Perhaps it is Fanny Crosby’s hymn “Blessed Assurance”. The rest of us have these directions:

“Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. . . .Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest. . . .Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices. . . Above all sing spiritually.”

These are suggestions for powerful music. They are taken directly from the DIRECTIONS FOR SINGING on page vii in our **United Methodist Hymnal**.

February, Black History Month, is a good time to look at the contribution of the African-American community to the music of our church. One of their best-known hymns is **Lift Every Voice and Sing**. For more about this hymn go to page 11 of this newsletter. To listen to it sung, go to this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i30SdcfEpSE>.



Pastor Danyal will be preaching each Sunday in February. We hope you will be able to join us in the Sanctuary for one or more of those services. But if not, our Sunday morning 9:30 am service is live streamed. For a link, go to our church website at www.fumceg.org. Previous services are also available on our website.

Here are more of the details for each Sunday and other days in February:

February 4 - Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Pastor Danyal’s theme – What do you live for? (Mark 8:34-38)

February 11 - Transfiguration Sunday

Pastor Danyal’s theme – What are you looking for? (John 1:35-38)

February 14 - Ash Wednesday

Pastor Danyal’s theme – Whom will you love? (Luke 6:27-36)

February 18 - First Sunday in Lent

Pastor Danyal’s theme – Why Do We Need To Find Jesus (Psalm 2)

February 25 - Second Sunday in Lent

Pastor Danyal’s theme - Finding Jesus with Us in Our Hard Places (Psalm 16)



HERE IS THE LECTIONARY FOR FEBRUARY

February 4 - Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

February 11 – 2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

February 14 – Ash Wednesday - Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10;
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

February 18 – Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

February 25 - Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Hi Sunday School Families!

February is here! Lent is around the corner, can you believe it? In class, our lessons, Bible verses and activities will revolve around the Lent season and the upcoming Easter holiday. Some activities we have to look forward to for February include Ash Wednesday, the burning of the palms, and our infamous Pretzel Sunday.



Volunteers! We are always welcoming parent or member volunteers in class! If you would like to assist during class on a Sunday morning, please email, or look for the clipboard sign up in the lobby of church, we would LOVE to have you!

Thanks for all of your support, and don't forget to tell your friends about how awesome and fun Sunday School is!

Stay warm, *Lauren Lehmann*
llehmann@fumceg.org

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

The next couple of months the youth group will be doing big events. As we prepare for those events, we need help from not just the youth but the congregation, our friends and community.

February 10 - From 1:00 pm -4:00 pm , the youth will be setting up for all Youth Group Fundraiser Spaghetti Dinner. The Dinner will be from 4:00 pm -7:00 pm. Dine in or take out (for more information see page 7). We are looking for Brownie Donations for this event.



February 11 - Both Junior and Senior groups will be taking a trip to the Dollar Store. We will meet at 11:00 am in the New Youth Lounge, then go to the Dollar Store then have lunch. We will be back around 1:00 pm.

February 25 - Any age/any one who would like to stay after to help decorate Love Kit bags 11:00 am -1:00 pm. We will also be collecting Art Show items.

March 9 - Community-Wide Art Show - We are looking for youth to be artists both musically and artistically.

March 16 - Rensselaer Street Soldiers/Love Kit Donations from 9:30 am -11:00 am at River Front Park. Street Soldiers is a movement that provides food, supplies and care for those in need throughout the community. We will be bringing part of the Love Kit donations down there and stay to hand out the items to people in the community.

Do you have a youth that would like to go on a small youth trip to Syracuse. We will be working in the Mission Hub Center sorting and packaging items that will then go out to different people in need throughout the US. This event will be on **April 5** and staying overnight coming back on **April 6**. Please see Amber if you would like to come. A reservation needs to be made soon. So Save the Date!

Rather if you are near or far, I hope you are the light for the world. Showing God's love.

God Bless, *Amber Telford*
Youthleaderamber@gmail.com

CHURCH KITCHEN NEEDS REPAIR

For those of you who work in the church kitchen during coffee hour and luncheons, I am sure you have noticed the countertop where the coffeemaker is has become unglued. The drawers in the island without the sink are hard to open and close. The closet doors do not open and shut easily either. It will be a major expense to upgrade the kitchen. So it was decided to place manila envelopes in the church bulletin once a month to collect funds to help with the cost of these upgrades. The funds collected will go into a fund overseen by the Trustees. Please help raise funds for this as the kitchen is used by everyone in the church at one time or another.

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

The next monthly meeting of the UWF will again be in the afternoon on **February 5** at 2:00 pm. We were so happy to have two new faces at our meeting. Please consider joining us. We will have devotions and prayers. Our business will be on the Art Show, Thrift Sale and other events coming up. Please join us.



Our spring Thrift Sale is **April 19-20**. We will need many hands to make this event a success. At our last sale, right after COVID, we were short-handed and a lot of items were donated. This Thrift Sale we plan on using only using the Fellowship Hall so, WE ARE ONLY ACCEPTING: men's, women's and children's clothing. Shoes are included. Also accepting: pocketbooks, linens: bedding, towels. Kitchenware: pots, pans, dishes, cooking utensils, silverware and small cooking appliances. Also a jewelry table. PLEASE HELP. The sign up sheets will be in the foyer on the table beginning in March.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT – JANUARY 2024

Your support to the ministries of our church in 2023 have enabled us to continue our ministries that have been ongoing for over 150 years. For those gifts given to support these ministries, we are very grateful. Your continued support in 2024 will enable us to continue our work together.

However, we continue to be challenged with balancing the spending plan needed to support our ministry with the funds received to support the spending plan. In December 2023, the Church Council approved a spending plan for 2024 that will support our ministry plan for 2024 even though the projected income for 2024 did not match the spending plan. This was a faith based step that assumed that there will eventually be sufficient income to support our ministry plan.

The Finance Committee has the responsibility for monitoring the income and expenditure of the church's General Fund to determine if any corrective actions need to be taken to our expenditure plan as we progress through the year. The General Fund of the church is used to receive gifts and donations which are used to pay expenditures such as staff salaries and other operating expenses.

We have been looking for a tool to convey the financial status of the church to everyone on a month to month basis. From past experience, we have seen people step up and fill a need when they become aware of the need. It is hoped that this tool will better show our financial need resulting in donors prayerfully considering making additional gifts to the church. With input from the Church Council it was decided that a report that simply showed the cash flow for the General Fund would provide better financial awareness to our supporters.

The Finance Committee will be providing a financial snapshot of the General Fund cash flow each month to provide a better understanding of the church's financial status. Initially, it will simply show the Year to Date (YTD) income and expenditures for the General Fund thru the end of the previous month along with the same data for the previous year. Future reports will also show this data graphically so that month to month changes are more apparent. The report will be prepared and presented about two weeks after the end of each month.

The December 2023 report is shown below:

First United Methodist Church of East Greenbush General Fund

		2023	2022
Balance	1/01	\$35,024	\$39,047
YTD Income	Thru 12/31	\$296,127	\$296,116
YTD Expenses	Thru 12/31	\$311,998	\$300,139
Balance	12/31	\$19,153	\$35,024

Art Sanderson, Treasurer

LOVE KITS/STREET SOLDIERS

Below is a list of items we are collecting for our Love Kits/Street Soldiers project. Please see Amber's Youth Fellowship article describing who the Street Soldiers are.

We will be collecting these items all through January and into February.

Items that are needed:

tooth brush & tooth paste;	deodorant; shampoo & conditioner;	body wash/bar soap
hats & scarves	mittens & hand warmers	New Package Underwear & socks
hair ties	razors & shaving cream	lotion
new towels & wash cloths	reusable water bottles (Please be new or never used)	

Other needs:

drink packet mix	instant coffee mix	baby diapers & baby wipes
pens	post it notes	small journals
adult coloring books	coloring pencils	



Made By Hand with Love Outreach Missions February 13 and 27 10:00 am February 21 6:00 pm

On Tuesday, **February 13** there will be a Special Cookie Decorating class by Barbara Morse. Heart cookies will be embellished to be given to the group at Hawthorne Ridge. We will be making pot holders, dishcloths and scrubbies for the next couple of months. Last year we contributed about 50 to St. Paul's Shelter and Rensselaer County Senior Center. This year we will also be making them to sell to help with our church kitchen needs. We have supplies available and are willing to teach you. Everyone is invited to join us for creating and/or conversation. Thanks.



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aleta.schweigert@gmail.com

MISSION TRIP

Hi! My name is Kevin Clark and I am one of the lucky few that have been selected to attend the Mission of Peace (MOP). The trip is sponsored by the Northeast Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. We will be going to Puerto Rico from **February 14 to February 24, 2024**. MOP is a yearly journey of discovery and Shalom to nations throughout the globe. While on MOP, myself and the other youth will be learning about how foreign cultures worship God and live their lives. It is primarily a people to people experience where we learn from the people of Puerto Rico how they worship God and create a community. I've always been fascinated by how different cultures operate in terms of the same religion.



Financial costs associated with this trip include airfare, food, board, transportation, tips, handling fees, services of local guides, adult advisors, museum and program fees, and tours.

Thank you in advance for your support. Please keep the youth and our chaperones in your prayers as we travel and do our mission work.

Blessings upon you,
Kevin

YOUTH FUNDRAISERS

Come support the youth in their fundraising journey. A group of youth will be going to Syracuse to the Conference Center to help sort and package items that will then go out to the US and beyond. To fund this event, the youth will be hosting a spaghetti and meatball dinner on **February 10** from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Pre-Order for \$15.00 and walk-ins will be \$20.00. We will have dine-in or take-out options available. Dinner will include meatballs, spaghetti, salad, bread and dessert. (gluten free and vegetarian options for Pre-Order only). This is a community event. We hope to see your family and friends, as well as the congregation there. To preorder please see Amber Telford or Jessica Sweeney to sign up or the online form on Facebook.



We are excited to announce our 2nd Annual Community-Wide Art Show! The Art Show will be **March 9** from 2:00 pm -4:00 pm! We are looking for all types of artists (Watercolor, Photographers, Paintings, Sculptures/ Ceramics and Even Fabric Artist) of any age. For more information, please see the Art Application form in the lobby, or email Amber at Youthleaderamber@gmail.com . We hope to see you there.



STORYTELLING NIGHT CONTINUES

Desi Biechman came to talk about his journey to sobriety, leading him to his walk with Jesus. The talk was very inspirational. He briefly talked about his ministry with Melchizedeks (MC) and how they minister to other motorcycle clubs.

Our next Storytelling Night will be on **February 7** at 7:00 pm when Dr. Joseph Collins, a long-time member of our church, will speak about *Research - Fun and Frustration*. Dr. Collins was a chemist at Sterling Winthrop in Rensselaer. He published *The Matrix of Life*.



JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY –WALKING IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

2024 Wesley Pilgrimage in England

An Immersion in Wesleyan Spirituality

"Discipleship Ministries is once again planning a ten-day pilgrimage to England to follow the life and spiritual journey of John and Charles Wesley and the movement they nurtured. We will explore the early growth of Methodism in England, which traveled to America and eventually became a global church! The 2024 Wesley Pilgrimage will take place **July 27-August 6, 2024.**"

For more information on what sounds like an exciting venture, go to:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/wesley-pilgrimage-2024>



DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH ISSUE OF THE CHURCH BELL IS FEBRUARY 19.

FROM ECO TEAM

Unity House is looking to expand its offering of professional attire for job seekers or those re-entering the workforce. It needs professional attire in a range of sizes and styles. Please consider donating your professional clothes, shoes, and accessories so they may be available to job seekers. Unity House is partnering with the EOC, whose students represent the diversity of the Capital Region, average in their thirties. Together, students can look and feel prepared: for interviews and first days on a new job. Donated clothing must be clean and ready to wear. You can drop your donation at Unity House at 2431 Sixth Avenue, Troy weekdays, from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm. For your donation, you'll receive thanks and a receipt, along with the knowledge that you are helping someone with a promising next chapter.



CARING FOR CREATION SERIES

On **February 4**, the Eco Team will start a new Caring for Creation video and discussion series. Sessions will begin at 1:30 pm and will be held at the East Greenbush Public Library, Room B. In each session, we view a short TED talk video and follow with discussion. This series is intended to encourage us to talk to one another about changes we see in the climate and learn what actions we can take to protect and heal the earth. Participants can attend one or all of the series.



Our **February 4** topic is *Why You Should Ditch Deadly Fossil-fuel Appliances*. Hear Donnel Baird describe his ambitious plan to protect the environment and human health by ripping the fossil fuel infrastructure out of aging buildings and upgrading it with smarter, cleaner, healthier technology.

Our **February 18** topic is *What Happens To Gas Stations When The World Goes Electric?* When the world goes fully electric, what happens to the cars, tools and livelihoods that rely on fossil fuels? Civil engineer and environmental sociologist Emily Grubert visualizes what a clean energy future will look like, outlining the considerations everyone needs to undertake now as the critical, decades-long transition begins.

The final two sessions of this winter's Caring for Creation series will be held on **March 3** and **March 17**. The topics and location will be announced in The Bell next month.

MEET OUR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SUBSTITUTE

Hello! For those who may not know me, I am Lauren Lehmann. I will be filling in as the substitute Christian Educator until further notice.

A little background information about myself; I am first off, a mother and wife. My husband is also a member of our church, Bob Lehmann, and we have two children - Gracie and Emma. I am a business owner by day, and mom by night. I own a hair salon, and truly enjoy my profession. I didn't start out my early professional years as a hair stylist though- I went to college to be an elementary school teacher- and life just took me down a different path. I have a lot of education and experience working with children, and actually was a volunteer Sunday School teacher when I was in my twenties. Some may say, working with children is my calling.

I look forward to meeting more of our church family as time progresses. So far, we have been very successful with the transition of teachers. I want to thank all of you for welcoming me, and for all of your continued help, especially those who lent a hand during Advent and Christmas Eve.

Our goal is to continue to build our attendance and consistency in our youth programs at church. We want to encourage the children to tell their friends, family, teammates, etc. to come check out our church- our christian education program!

If anyone ever has any questions, concerns, comments, please feel free to email me or contact me at any time!

Lauren Lehmann



EXERCISE CAN BE FUN

Zumba Gold class students at the Church. We have been having a lot of fun getting together each Thursday to dance, socialize and continuing to stay active when outside is not always an option during the colder months.

Paula Deming, Instructor 518-527-7886



MISSIONS TEAM RECOGNIZES EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE

The Missions Team recently celebrated the leadership of Matie Flowers and Len Finke with a reception in their honor. Unfortunately, Matie was unable to attend. Len and Matie, both former chairs of the Missions Ministry brought us a former missionary, John Yambasu, from Sierra Leone. Len has done mission work in Brazil and Nicaragua, as well as in Africa and North America. He extended a hand to local resident, Joe Ford with over 60 other Christians to assist Joe with the flooding he experienced in his home. Len also played a vital role in a refugee resettlement program in our church. Matie contributed much to our church family and community. With her doctorate in psychology, Matie generously provided valuable counseling services to those in need and advocated for bequest funds designated to Missions. She was instrumental in bringing Lynn Minderman's Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections organization to our church. Matie will long be remembered for her cheerful outlook and her compassion for others. She always encourages us to look at life from someone else's perspective in order to gain understanding. Advice we can all benefit from. As we continue our journey, we thank God for providing us with the service of these two humble servants of Christ throughout many years.



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SOCIAL WITNESS

It's time for a celebration, a Methodist celebration. "Our" building in Washington DC, the only non-governmental building on Capitol Hill, is 100 years old.

"On Capitol Hill, The United Methodist Building's life began 100 years ago. . . . The groundbreaking of what was then called the Methodist Building began in 1923. [It opened January 1924]. . . The remarkable construction of this building and 100 years of faith-based witness demonstrates what engagement of Methodist people can accomplish. The promotion of justice and the pursuit of peace marks this historic building and the mission of the United Methodist Church.

Today, the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill is a center of activity for United Methodists to gather often with faith partners to host meetings, organize conferences, offer seminars, plan rallies and advocate for



policy and legislative justice. The actions, responses and advocacy of this vital social justice ministry continue to move at a rapid pace on Capitol Hill and at the United Nations. Issues of peacebuilding, immigration, migration, civil and human rights, health care for all, climate, racial/ethnic justice have permeated the work with many successes over the years, offering inspiration for the challenges ahead."

The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society is headquartered in the building.

Step outside the front door and look to your left -- The US Supreme Court Building. Look across the street -- the US Capitol Building. We Methodists are right in the center of things. Take a look at the video noted below and, in the second half, you will see Heather Smith, the wife of the pastor of Delmar UMC. She is busy at work at a conference working on social issues that face the United Methodist Church.

To watch the video, "Celebrating 100 Years of Social Witness," go to

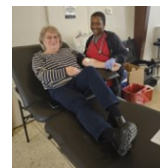
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPq_syC_-qQ&t=10s



Words of action to think about...

God made, Adam bit, Noah arked, Abraham split, Joseph ruled, Jacob fooled, (Calibri 9pt.) **bush talked,** **Moses balked,** **Pharaoh plagued,** **people walked,** **sea divided,** (Bodoni MT Black 8pt.) *tablets guided,* *promise landed,* *Saul freaked,* *David peeked,* (Lucinda Calligraphy 7pt.) **prophets warned,** **Jesus born,** **God walked,** **love talked,** **anger crucified,** (Broadway 8pt.) hope died, Love rose, Spirit flamed, Word spread, God remained. (Times New Roman 9pt.)

- ☐ The Publicity Team would appreciate receiving all the information you would like advertised for your event **no later than the 15th of the MONTH PRIOR to the actual date.** If received after the 15th, various newspaper deadlines may be missed. Please send the information for events to be on our church website to Valerie Perrotte at wperrott@nycap.rr.com (518) 852-9890, and send the information for events to be in newspapers to Lorraine Beals at lsbeals@nycap.rr.com (518) 961-4050. Thank you for your cooperation.
- ☐ **Our latest Red Cross Blood Drive on Friday, January 19 was a Success**—You answered the call and instead of meeting our goal of 23 usable blood donations, we finished the day with 28!! **THANK YOU! This drive was honoring Lee Pierce.**
- ☐ **150 Years Anniversary Commemorative Ceramic Christmas Ornaments** are still available for sale. The cost is \$5.00. Please see Lorraine Beals or Aleta Schweigert.
- ☐ **Scholarships available for United Methodists** — The United Methodist Higher Education Foundation welcomes scholarship applications for the 2024-2025 academic year through **March 1.** Every year, the foundation awards more than \$2 million in scholarships to nearly 1,000 students planning to attend a United Methodist-related institution of higher education.
- ☐ Looking ahead to summer, Skye Farm Summer Camp Open House will be held on Sunday, **June 23rd.** Here is a chance to take a tour of the camp, meet the staff, roast a s'more, take a wagon ride and to see Skye Farm. Mark the date on your calendar now so you don't forget.
- ☐ The United Methodist Church Board of Church and Society will hold a Zoom meeting on **February 7, 2024.** Join the Church and Society staff and partners to discuss the revised Social Principles. Hear about the motivation, process, draft and what to expect when it comes before the General Conference this spring. To register for the program go to the Church and Society website at <https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/overview>.
- ☐ Remember! Mark your calendar and say a prayer for the coming session of General Conference. It will be held in Charlotte, NC **2024.**



SKYE FARM
CAMP & RETREAT CENTER
Foundation

An Evening at Camp

Join us for the Skye Farm Foundation's annual fundraising dinner to preserve the long-term future of Skye Farm. There will be dinner, awards, skits, and camp songs!

SAVE THE DATE!

February 3, 2024
Shenendehowa UMC
Doors at 5pm | Dinner at 5:30pm

FEBRUARY—BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The UMC Discipleship Ministries offers this background for Black History Month. “February is Black History Month, and in the woven tapestry of The United Methodist Church, African Americans are—and have been—vital, having played a major role in the denomination’s development. . . . Black History Month is an opportunity to celebrate the gifts and offerings that African Americans contribute to the world and the church through art, music, writing, leadership, and action. There is much to recognize, reflect upon, and share with others. . . . As you look toward Black History Month, may it be a time of learning, growth, and celebration. . . [of] the gifts and contributions that African Americans make to the church and world. May this month lead us to look more like the beloved community that God intends for the world.” Mentioned earlier in these pages is the hymn, **Lift Every Voice and Sing**. Here is what James Weldon Johnson, one of the authors of that hymn says about its origin,



“A group of young men in Jacksonville, Florida, arranged to celebrate Lincoln’s birthday in 1900. My brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, and I decided to write a song to be sung at the exercises. I wrote the words and he wrote the music. Our New York publisher, Edward B. Marks, made mimeographed copies for us, and the song was taught to and sung by a chorus of five hundred colored school children.

Shortly afterwards my brother and I moved away from Jacksonville to New York, and the song passed out of our minds. But the school children of Jacksonville kept singing it; they went off to other schools and sang it; they became teachers and taught it to other children. Within twenty years it was being sung over the South and in some other parts of the country. Today the song, popularly known as the Negro National Hymn, is quite generally used.

The lines of this song repay me in an elation, almost of exquisite anguish, whenever I hear them sung by Negro children.”

Watch this video for a little more background of the hymn and an interesting rendition of the hymn itself,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i30SdcfEpSE>